

INTERACTION OF ALTERNATIVENESS AND ANTONYMY AND ITS REALIZATION IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract. This paper presents the results of research devoted to one of the significant aspects of language categories, namely, their interaction. Alternativeness and antonymy are described in their interaction, the realization of which in the English language is shown through the distributional and contextual analysis. The form and variety of this interaction also reveal the diversity of alternative situations existing in reality.

Key words: *Interaction, Alternativeness, Antonymy, Form and variety of interaction, Disjunctive conjunctions, Systematic and non-systematic antonyms.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The elements in the objective reality as well as the thoughts about them in the human consciousness exist in interaction (Кондаков, 1975, 87) which is reflected in the language system where categories and units interact with each other and make up complex language means. This fact entails the necessity to study extralinguistic as well as linguistic phenomena not separately but in their interaction which in its turn requires the corresponding pattern of research. Analysis of one phenomenon through its interaction with others helps to receive its complete description. In other words, interaction can be regarded as ontological, epistemological and methodological category.

According to A. Bondarko, any conceptual category must reflect some fundamental feature of the objective reality and be conveyed by the system of language units (Бондарко, 1978, 72). As it has been previously stated, alternativeness and antonymy meet these criteria. Alternativeness is defined as the necessity

to choose between several exclusive opportunities (Философский энциклопедический словарь, 1997, 15). Due to the diversity of factors, influencing the inevitability of such choice, alternativeness is considered to be the characteristic feature of human existence. It penetrates into all spheres of everyday life and it finds expression in various language means, the disjunctive conjunctions being the main of them (Склярова, 2012, 52). Antonymy is connected with contrary features of extralinguistic objects, reflected by human consciousness and realized in the opposite meanings of language units on different levels (Боева, 2000). Thus, both alternativeness and antonymy are connected with the essential features of the objective reality and at the same time are expressed in the language in many different ways.

As it has been proved by the previous research work, alternativeness interacts with different semantic categories, such as temporality, quantity, comparison, modality, voice, aspect, reference, location, causation, condition, concession, personality, state and others (Склярова, 2009). Such interaction is actualized in speech when disjunctive conjunctions and language units conveying the meaning of corresponding semantic categories function together. On the one hand, it reveals the interaction of fundamental extralinguistic phenomena, which make up the conceptual basis of the related semantic categories. On the other hand, it displays the variety of alternative situations existing in reality.

The objective of this article is to consider alternativeness and antonymy in the framework of their interaction, realized in the English language.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research is based on the extensive material from authentic sources, in particular,

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fiction books of English-speaking authors, such as D. Aldridge, M. Atwood, T. Capote, J. Chase, J. Cheever, A. Christie, P. Cornwell, L. Elmore, B. Glanville, A. Greely, M. Hardwick, E. Hemingway, L. Irvine, T. Lahaye and J. Jenkins, D. Lawrence, I. Le Carre, M. Meek, A. Perry, I. Salinger, S. Sheldon, D. Steel, J. Tolkien, J. Wain.

The tasks of the study are:

-Explicating the background of interaction of alternativeness and antonymy;

-Determining the form in which this interaction exists in the language;

-Establishing the range of such interaction.

The methods applied in this study are selected in accordance with the objective and tasks of research. The possibility of interaction of alternativeness and antonymy is explained by interconnections between extralinguistic facts underlying these language categories. The variety of their interaction is demonstrated, firstly, with the help of distributional analysis which shows all achievable combinations of disjunctive conjunctions and various types of antonyms, secondly, through contextual analysis which reveals all shades of meanings acquired by disjunctive conjunctions in the particular lexical and grammatical environment, while connecting antonyms.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the psychological point of view antonymy of language units is connected with the associations, which appear due to contrary experiences of our mind, and under certain circumstances one sensation or idea entails the contradictory one. This is the reason of frequent dual occurrence of antonymous language units in speech. Antonyms regularly function together in constructions with disjunctive conjunctions (Введенская, 1982, 19; Новиков, 1985, 22). It is explained by the fact that the alternative meaning of such connectors as **или, либо** in Russian, *or, either...* or in English, *oder, entweder...* *oder* in German underlines the opposite meanings of antonyms (Введенская, 1973, 22). Besides, the interconnection of alternativeness and antonymy is determined by the fact that the opportunities which are given to people to make a choice between, are often contradictory, while antonymy is the extreme type of contradiction.

Any interaction may be measured in such parameters as form and variety (Муругова, 2007, 76). Interaction of alternativeness and

antonymy is realized in the form of constructions where disjunctive conjunctions connect language units with opposite meanings. On the one hand, the variety of their interaction manifests itself in the types of antonyms which can be found in this position.

The analysis of the English language shows that the following types of antonyms can be joined by disjunctive conjunctions:

- lexical antonyms – notional words of the same part of speech, such as nouns (1), adjectives (2), verbs (3) and adverbs (4):

(1) **Truth or fiction**, it doesn't matter (P. Cornwell, *Body of Evidence*).

(2) **"New or old?"** Marino asked (P. Cornwell, *All That Remains*).

(3) **And yet anyone could mount or descend** as we have done (A. Christie, *The Adventure of the Cheap Flat*).

(4) **That first morning, when I did go back I remember coming in, not looking left or right, feeling them watching me, all of them, everything dead silent** (B. Glanville, *The Thing He Loves*).

Besides antonyms with opposite root morphemes (1-4) the positions of homogeneous members in the construction with disjunctive conjunctions can be occupied by antonyms with opposite prefixes or suffixes (5) and lexemes one of which contains some affix expressing negation of the meaning conveyed by the stem (6, 7):

(5) **Either you exclude or include** this possibility (S. Sheldon, *Morning, Noon, Night*).

(6) **Clothes could be decent or indecent** (M. Atwood, *Bodily Harm*).

(7) ... **And with good reason, for on the bed lay a large suitcase which she had been in the process either of packing or unpacking** (M. Meek, *In Remembrance of Rose*).

- lexical antonyms, belonging to different parts of speech, which were singled out into a separate type by N. Boeva (Боева, 2004, 104):

(8) **You are about as good as she is; and she can dance better than anybody living or dead** (I. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*). - participle I and adjective.

(9) **This is not what Rennie thought she wanted to know. Nor does she appreciate Lora's generosity; nor is Paul a buffet casserole or a spare room, occupied or vacant as the case may be** (M. Atwood, *Bodily Harm*). - participle II and adjective

(10) **Has your experience been different, or the same?** (D. Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*). - adjective and pronoun.

- morphological antonyms, based on the oppositions of present / past / future tense (11), active / passive voice (12), indicative / subjunctive mood (13). The antonymy of these grammatical forms is determined by the extralinguistic reality and it exists not only in the language system where these forms are opposed to each other making up the paradigm but is displayed in the so called syntagmatic convergence (Боева, 2000, 29, 60) whereas disjunctive conjunctions strengthen their mutual exclusiveness

(11) *Anyone you **know or knew** of who had placed his or her trust in Christ alone for salvation has been taken to heaven by Christ* (T. Lahaye, J. Jenkins, *Left Behind*).

(12) *There's only one law here – **kill or be killed** and I've had direct orders to kill in this case, don't forget that* (I. Higgins, *A Fine Night For Dying*).

(13) *There was indeed a close resemblance between this man and his brother Mathieu; **or would have been**, had not this one's features been so gaunt and strained* (M. Hardwick, *Prisoner of the Devil*).

In the following example antonymy is grounded on the opposition of indicative / subjunctive mood and affirmation / negation:

(14) ***They wouldn't have told**, of course, if he had been kidnapped **or will they?*** (J. Chase, *A Lotus for Miss Quon*).

- syntactic antonyms – predicative constructions generated from the same basic structures, with identical or synonymous lexical composition and opposite grammatical meanings which are revealed by means of negation in one of the structures (15, 16), antonymous connectors, expressing space (17) time (18) or abstract (19) reference, in the exchange of subject / object relations (20). Similar elements in one of the antonymous syntactic units may be partially (15) or fully omitted with the destruction of the predicative core (16) which is possible due to their structural parallelism.

(15) *There was a moment right in the beginning when **they either grabbed control of the situation** and it went smoothly, **or they didn't grab control** and it could turn into a fuck-up with a lot of yelling and jabbing* (L. Elmore, *Gold Coast*).

(16) *He knew that every year too, but this time he would find out **if it was really complete or not*** (D. Aldridge, *Hunter*).

(17) *Was Caleb **in the house or out of the house**, when Lady Ravensbrook came?* (A. Perry, *Cane His Brother*).

(18) *I can't tell you the size of the blade, for example, **whether the injury occurred***

before or after she was shot... (P. Cornwell, *All That Remains*).

(19) *As yet we had no opportunity of solidifying the pair aspect of our relationship by **clanning together in a united reaction for or against any other people*** (L. Irvine, *Castaway*).

(20) ***He'll call again. Or you're going to call him*** (P. Cornwell, *All That Remains*).

Thus, the opposite meaning of syntactic units is determined by the presence of antonymous notional and formal words, affirmative and negative verb forms, in other words, the antonymy of language means of other levels (Власова, 1994, 16-17). The contrary meaning of notional words is underlined by parallel constructions:

(21) *It was **a sort of a death too or a sort of a birth*** (D. Lawrence, *Aaron's Rod*).

The described above antonymous units exist in language and may function together in speech. In other words, they belong to the systematic type of antonyms. But the constructions with disjunctive conjunctions also consist of so called non-systematic or "occasional" (Введенская, 1982, 15; Власова, 1994, 35) antonyms, including the following cases:

- contextual lexical (22) grammatical (23) antonyms as well as antonymous units of different levels (24). Their meanings happen to be contradictory in the certain lexical environment and this opposition is intensified in various ways:

(22) *He didn't do it from a psychological point of view; merely as a plain man's guide to the questions that should be **asked or avoided** as the case might be, when the accused stood before the Court* (M. Meek, *In Remembrance of Rose*).

(23) ***It is deal through me or there's no deal*** (I. Le Carre, *The Tailors of Panama*).

(24) ***Whether this began before she decided to write** what she was currently working on **or afterwards**, I can't say with certainty* (P. Cornwell, *Body of Evidence*).

- syntactic antonyms, one of which is expressed implicitly but its meaning is perceived by the listener with the help of the context:

(25) *She can **either hitch up her dress and tuck it onto her underpants**, with everyone watching her, **or [not hitch up her dress and tuck it onto her underpants but]** get it wet and smell like seaweed for the rest of the day* (M. Atwood, *Bodily Harm*).

- syntactic antonyms, one of which serves as a paraphrase of the other, conveying

the opposite meaning descriptively and extendedly. Such antonymous units are not characterized by syntactic parallelism and have different lexical composition:

(26) *At Pencey, you **either froze to death or died of the heat*** (I. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*).

- antonyms of the same or of different levels of the language, one of which is a word (27) or a word combination (28), regarded as a regular means of conveying the idea of contradiction, capable of being antonymous to any language units with the exceptions determined by the rules of combining words:

(27) *We indulged ourselves in one or two highly extravagant food fantasies, made **desultory or otherwise** comments on the fishing, chatted inconsequentially or simply sat in companionable silence* (L. Irvine, *Castaway*).

(28) *“**Bonne on my right, Pebbles on my left** – ”*

Or was it the other way around? (L. Elmore, *Gold Coast*).

The connotations, which disjunctive conjunctions acquire in the certain contextual environment while connecting antonyms, also reveals the variety of interactions of alternativeness and antonymy. According to the general opinion, the meaning of conjunctions is rather abstract and generalized and its particularization occurs in the context while the essential denotation is preserved (Ярцева, 1976, 12). In other words, conjunctions have inherent features and in speech they obtain contextual features (Lakoff, 1970, 150). The analysis of language data shows that connecting antonymous units, disjunctive conjunctions express the following connotative meanings, connected with different types of alternativeness:

- absolute exclusiveness, when antonyms denote situation, which can't coexist at all. This connotation does not have any lexical and/or grammatical indicators; it is understood from the extralinguistic context (Склярова, 2012, 75). Absolute exclusiveness can be observed between various types of antonyms, such as systematic, namely lexical (29), morphological (30), syntactic (31, 32) as well as non-systematic (33):

(29) *Things will **either get worse or better**, but they won't stay the same* (P. Cornwell, *All That Remains*).

(30) *There's only one law here – **kill or be killed** and I've had direct orders to kill in this case, don't forget that* (I. Higgins, *A Fine Night for Dying*).

(31) *Rennie feels that she's been*

*investigated and dismissed, she's been pronounced negligible and this is **either because Paul believes her or because he doesn't*** (M. Atwood, *Bodily Harm*).

(32) *Charisma is something **you have or you don't have*** (P. Cornwell, *Postmortem*).

(33) *Soon he must **either get to shore or be drowned*** (J. Wain, *The Life Guard*).

The idea of absolute exclusiveness may be modified by hypothetic modality which is conveyed by different parts of speech with suppositional meaning as well as by verbs denoting mental activity:

(34) *I think he **got it or maybe he is getting** it now* (A. Christie, *Why Didn't They Ask Evans*).

(35) *Two **possibilities** remain: **it was hidden on board** – also rather difficult – **or it was thrown overboard*** (A. Christie, *The Million Dollar Bond Robbery*);

- enumeration, when antonyms denote situations which do not contradict each other and even coexist. In such cases the meaning of the alternative does not disappear, but it is neutralized. This connotation does not get contextual indicators either, but in such cases the conjunction *or* can be easily substituted by *and* which is sometimes accompanied by some grammatical transformations (Склярова, 2012, 75). The transformational analysis can be very helpful in those cases when linguistic facts can't be explained otherwise (Foss, Hakes, 1978, 38):

(36) *And yet anyone could **mound or descend** as we have done* (A. Christie, *The Adventure of the Cheap Flat*). → *And yet anyone could **mound and descend** as we have done*

The idea of enumeration may be modified by condition (37) or concession (38) in the corresponding clauses (Склярова, 2012, 75):

(37) *If I wait for her or if I decide not to marry her I know I'm going to think pretty soon that it was a mistake* (T. Capote, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*).

(38) *You're a student – **whether the idea appeals to you or not*** (I. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*);

- alternation, when antonyms denote situations or events which take turns, thus excluding each other during the period of realization (Склярова, 2012, 78-79). The language units which modify the meaning of disjunctive conjunctions by the idea of alternation are adverbial modifiers of time, expressed by adverbs with indefinite temporal characteristics, such as *sometimes, seldom, often, always,*

from time to time, the names of months, days of the week, seasons, different dates, word combinations with prepositions *after, before, during*, adverbial clauses of time, introduced by conjunctions *when, while, after, before, till, until*, etc. These contextual indicators state the period or interval of alternation (Склярова, 2012, 239-240):

(39) *During the morning I usually walked in the town or out of the town* (E. Hemingway, *Fiesta*);

- distribution, when antonyms denote qualities or actions, situations or events spread between some amount of animate or inanimate objects in such a way that certain groups of these objects are characterized by particular qualities or actions or are involved into particular situations or events, which excludes other qualities, actions, situations, events (Склярова, 2012, 79). The language units which cause the appearance of this connotative meaning of disjunctive conjunctions are class nouns in the plural form, sometimes accompanied by cardinal numerals, collective nouns, personal pronoun of the third person plural, pronoun *everybody*, substantivized adjectives and participles etc., used in the function of the subject (Склярова, 2012, 242-243):

(40) *Clothes could be decent or indecent* (M. Atwood, *Bodily Harm*);

- motivation, when the second part of the construction with the disjunctive conjunction encourages the occurrence of the situation or event represented in the first part by stating the possible consequences which may arise if this situation or event does not take place. The implicit condition in such syntactic structures is antonymous to the contents of the part preceding the conjunction (Склярова, 2012, 80):

(41) *You do what you're told here or [if you don't do] I'll bust your ass* (S. Sheldon, *If Tomorrow Comes*).

The particular form of the predicate in both parts is determined by the appearance of this connotative meaning of the conjunction. Thus, the first predicate is used in the imperative mood or contains modal verbs *can, should, must, have to*, the construction *to be going to*, conveying necessity, obligation, prohibition, intention, suggestion, recommendation and other meanings which imply direct or indirect demand to fulfill an actions, expressed by non-finite verb forms. The second predicate is used in the future indefinite tense or in the subjunctive mood or in the present tenses expressing future actions, or it contains the construction *to be going to* or modal verbs conveying possibility, probability (Склярова, 2012, 246-248);

- reformulation, when antonyms denote one and the same situation but the latter add precision into its description as the former do not depict the real properly or correctly (Склярова, 2012, 85). It mostly happens with morphological antonyms based on tense (42, 43, 44) and mood (45, 46) distinctions, which make up the necessary environment for the disjunctive conjunctions to acquire this connotation, indicated also by such lexical and syntactic means as *rather, better, at least* etc. They underline that the information presented in the second part of the construction is more preferable or reliable than that, conveyed in the first part (Склярова, 2012, 86). Besides, special punctuation marks such as commas, dashes, help to distinguish this type of alternativeness from others. They show the spontaneous appearance of the antonymous description of the situation in the mind and in the speech of an individual (Склярова, 2012, 83-84):

(42) *Alfred Dreifus is, or rather, was a captain in the French Artillery* (M. Hardwick, *The Prisoner of the Devil*).

(43) *This is someone he loves or once loved* (P. Cornwell, *Postmortem*).

(44) *The best brains in Fleet Street believe it, or they very soon will* (I. Le Carre, *The Tailor of Panama*).

(45) *"Of course I didn't – or wouldn't have if I'd known anything about it."* (A. Christie, *The Nemean Lion*).

(46) *It would appear that we had a miscarriage of justice here. Or we would have had, if we had gone any further* (D. Steel, *Season of Passion*);

- approximation, which consists in the inexact identification of extralinguistic reality due to many reasons, in particular the lack of appropriate background knowledge, obscure and ambiguous perception of the surrounding world, dissatisfaction by the word existing in the language for naming certain things, carelessness of the speaker (Бузаров, Лынова, 1991, 100), absence in the language or in the idiolect of the individual of the correct word to express a certain idea, deliberate imprecise and vague depiction of the situation determined by the etiquette (Шувалова, 1990, 91). In this case the alternative meaning is neutralized and this connotation is expressed by disjunctive conjunctions when they become elements of the set expressions *sooner or later* and *more or less*, the latter being multifunctional as it serves for approximate characteristics of objects (48), qualities (49) and actions (50):

(47) *And sooner or later as he lurked*

and pried on the borders he would be caught, and taken – for examination (J. Tolkien, The Lord of the Ring).

(48) But Mr. Bleibner, I understand, was more or less of an amateur? (A. Christie, The Adventure of the Egyptian Tomb).

(49) Underneath the bamboos were nine or ten sheets of corrugated iron full of rust and holes but all more or less the same length (L. Irvine, Castaway).

(50) I got it more or less (P. Cornwell, Postmortem).

4. CONCLUSIONS

Interaction of semantic categories of alternativeness and antonymy is revealed in speech in the form of constructions with disjunctive conjunctions and language units with opposite meanings. The variety of this interaction is realized in the connotative meanings the disjunctive conjunctions may acquire while connecting antonyms, in particular, absolute exclusiveness, enumeration, alternation, distribution, motivation, reformulation, approximation. The variety of interaction is also realized in the types of antonyms which may be joined by disjunctive conjunctions, namely, systematic lexical antonyms of the same and different parts of speech, grammatical antonyms based on categorical oppositions of verb forms, syntactic antonyms with complete and compressed structure as well as nonsystematic antonyms appearing in the context. They reflect the divergence of contrary extralinguistic situations which in specific circumstances and due to definite reasons are regarded as alternatives by the speaker.

Conflict of interests

Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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